

## **Scranton Times-Tribune (1-21)**

EPA water deliveries arrive in Dimock

By Laura Legere (Staff Writer)

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DIMOCK TWP. - The first tanker of water from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency reached Carter Road on Friday in what will become a regular delivery to four homes as federal regulators investigate the impact of natural gas drilling on drinking water here.

Encouraged by supporters of the affected families who were cheering its arrival, the turquoise truck stopped in front of the Sautner home with a double blast of its horn before contractors unrolled a hose and started to fill a bulk tank in the yard.

The delivery came a day after the federal agency announced it will conduct its own sampling of 61 water wells in a 9-square-mile area of Dimock after its review of data collected by the state, gas driller Cabot Oil & Gas Corp. and other firms raised concerns about groundwater contamination connected to Cabot's expansive drilling operations in the area.

The deliveries of water drawn in Easton may stop or expand to other homes, depending on what the EPA discovers through its sampling, beginning with the four homes where an EPA toxicologist said past results raised either "potential" or "imminent and substantial" health concerns. Other homes to be tested include 17 properties where the state found methane from faulty Cabot wells seeping into water supplies, 30 homes in the immediate area that have been sampled in the past and 10 homes where evidence of health impacts may be connected to contaminated groundwater or where new data could fill past gaps, the agency said.

The EPA has invited both the state and Cabot to perform simultaneous sampling at the water wells it tests, Community Involvement Coordinator Trish Taylor said.

The state Department of Environmental Protection wants to take simultaneous samples at the 61 homes, spokeswoman Katherine Gresh said, but it was rejected by a "significant number" of homeowners on Friday when staff members called for permission to access their water wells.

"We've let EPA know this and will work to analyze additional water samples that they intend to take on those properties and give to us," she said.

Cabot spokesman George Stark said the company has accepted the EPA's offer even as it criticized the agency's actions.

The company denies causing any contamination in Dimock and says the water quality reflects natural conditions.

Cabot released a statement Friday saying it is "disappointed" in the EPA's sampling program, which it called "inconsistent" with state regulators' findings and EPA's own earlier statements about the quality of the water.

"What is needed is an objective approach to dealing with community concerns - something missing in recent EPA actions," the statement said. "EPA's changing posture on sampling in Dimock is indicative of a broader problem of inconsistency with scientific process and a lack of cooperation with state and private sector parties."

The deliveries Friday were met by families and drilling critics rallying in support of the EPA's actions who accused state regulators of failing to help them and enabling bad practices by the industry.

"The EPA's stated policy is to step in where states have failed to enforce," filmmaker Josh Fox said, "which means the state of Pennsylvania and Gov. Tom Corbett has failed in its obligation to protect the citizens of Pennsylvania." Ms. Gresh said any statement that DEP has failed the homeowners is "absolutely inaccurate and is not grounded in reality."

"DEP has upheld the law on behalf of the affected homeowners in Dimock every step of the way," she said. "Every resident has been given an opportunity to have their water supply repaired or replaced" through a December 2010

settlement between DEP and Cabot. That settlement, which replaced an earlier state-sponsored plan to provide Dimock residents with a public waterline, also required Cabot to pay more than \$4 million into escrow accounts for the families.

Dimock residents urged federal regulators to supply water to more families, especially four of eight families to whom water deliveries were promised by the EPA two weeks ago and then almost immediately revoked. Some of those same families were mistakenly told Thursday they would be receiving water, then received calls later apologizing for the error.

Ms. Taylor, who said she made many of those calls, admitted "there was some miscommunication and we were not prepared" when the first promises were made.

"We wanted to be able to provide water to people we knew were running out of water," she said. "We tried to get a water truck set up and have it deliver, but it did fall through."

The four homes on the original list that are not receiving water will be sampled first before the EPA decides if water deliveries are necessary, she said. She emphasized that EPA headquarters is "very aware" of what the Philadelphia-based regional office is doing.

"It is a national concern," she said.

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